

Message Text

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67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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R 111853Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8168

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: NI SECRETARY ON CEASE FIRE

REF: (A) LONDON 578; (B) BELFAST 46

1. NI SECRETARY REES, IN FEBRUARY 11 STATEMENT TO COMMONS, SAID THAT LATEST PROVISIONAL IRA (IRAP) CEASE FIRE HAD BEEN EFFECTED WITHOUT CONCESSIONS FROM HMG. BUT REITERATED HIS JANUARY 14 PROMISE (REF A) THAT "GENUINE AND PERMANENT" END TO VIOLENCE WOULD RESULT IN REDUCED BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE AND' ULTIMATELY, END OF DETENTION. HOWEVER, HE STRESSED THAT HE MUST BE CONVINCED OF IRAP SINCERITY BEFORE HE WOULD TAKE ANY ACTION WHICH MIGHT RISK MORE LIVES, EITHER MILITARY OR CIVILIAN. FOR THE PRESENT, HE SAID ROAD BLOCKS, SEAR-CHES, AND IDENTITY CHECKS WOULD BECOME LESS FREQUENT AND THAT HE WOULD NOT SIGN FURTHER DETENTION ORDERS. MOST SIGNIFICANT POINT, HOWEVER, WAS HIS ANNOUNCEMENT OF ESTABLISHMENT OF UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF"INCIDENT CENTERS" TO MONITOR TRUCE AND SERVE AS COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES, PARTICIPANTS AND NI OFFICE (ALTHOUGH PRESSED, REES REFUSED TO SPECIFY

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NUMBER OR LOCATION OF THESE CENTERS -- ON ONE OCCASION

HE SPOKE OF "FIVE OR SIX" AND ON ANOTHER "SEVEN OR EIGHT"). CENTERS WOULD ALLOW "LEGAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS" (READ PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN) TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER, AND NI OFFICE TO CLARIFY, LOCAL ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT THREATEN MAINTENANCE OF PEACE.

2. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS FROM LOYALIST (UUUC) MPS, REES SPECIFICALLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY DENIED HMG HAD SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH IRAP OR PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN, OR THAT HMG HAD AGREED TO ANY SPECIFIC QUID PRO QUO AS CONDITION FOR CEASE FIRE (REF B). HE ALSO STRESSED HMG'S INTENTION TO ENFORCE LAW ON ALL VIOLATORS, REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL OR PARAMILITARY AFFILIATION. IN THIS REGARD, HE SPECIFICALLY CITED SECTARIAN KILLINGS AS MAJOR CONCERN AND POTENTIAL THREAT TO TRUCE, AND WARNED THAT SECURITY FORCES WOULD MEET THIS THREAT. HE NOTED THAT HMG WOULD NOT TOLERATE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS USING PEACE TO BUILD UP SUPPLIES OF EXPLOSIVES AND WEAPONS FOR FUTURE VIOLENCE.

3. COMMENT - REES STATEMENT WAS EVENLY BALANCED TO RESPOND TO CONCERNS OF BOTH CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES AND VERY WELL RECEIVED BY COMMONS. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE REES OR OTHER MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT CAN DO TO DISPEL PROTESTANT FEARS OF SELL OUT, HMG IS AWARE OF THIS THREAT TO THE CURRENT FRAGILE PEACE. BASED ON REES' STATEMENT, IT APPEARS THAT HMG WILL LOWER PROFILE OF BRITISH TROOPS, PASSING GREATER SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES TO ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY. HOWEVER, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TOLERATE PROTESTANT-SPONSORED VIOLENCE OR SECTARIAN KILLINGS ANY MORE THAN IT WILL TURN A BLIND EYE TO IRAP EFFORTS TO REARM AND REORGANIZE. ALTHOUGH REES' ASSURANCES THAT HMG DID NOT PROMISE QUID PRO QUO FOR CEASE FIRE ARE NO DOUBT TECHNICALLY CORRECT, THE IRAP CERTAINLY EXPECTS THE RELEASE OR PAROLE OF SOME DETAINEES AND CONVICTS, AS WILL THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE. ACCORDINGLY, WE EXPECT NI OFFICE WILL BE ANNOUNCING RELEASE OF LIMITED NUMBER OF PRISONERS WITHIN THE WEEK. REES STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO COMMENT ON SITUATION IN IRISH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPUBLIC, DESPITE SEVERAL QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO DRAW HIM OUT ON THIS SUBJECT.

SPIERS

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Message Attributes

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